

Son or Servant?

(1/5/25)

Please turn to *Galatians 4:1-31*.

You ever watch bull riding? That bull is deceptive! When he's locked into the enclosed gate he seems calm and controlled, allowing the bull rider to safely mount up. The moment the gate opens, however, the true nature of the bull is revealed: *he's wild, full of angry energy, and bucks violently attempting to dislodge the rider*. After the rider falls off, the bull then tries to gore and trample him.

That's the way 2025 is starting out. What happened in New Orleans, then in Las Vegas...ouch! Picture the month of December 2024 when we're enjoying Christmas and family, hoping and praying the New Year will be better than the last. On New Year's Eve we carefully mount the bull called 2025 and seem to be successful...until the gate opens.

The Lord prophesied in His Bible that the **Last Days would be "perilous times"** and only get more so as we approach the Second Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

It's vital that during these troubled times we're living like the sons and daughters of God and not servants.

It seems humble & truthful to call ourselves His servants, but is it really?

What if it's both humble and truthful to refer to ourselves as His sons instead?

[Gal 4:1-3 ESV] 1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

Let's establish some terms before we continue:

- **Slave/Servant:** a person who was literally bought and becomes the property of the master. Was not an employee & therefore not paid and couldn't quit, was not family, worked for room and board only, and inherited nothing. Had no rights, could be punished physically w/o reprisal from the law, and even thrown into debtors prison if the master was unsatisfied. *Status of getting room & board vs. jail was determined completely by obedience to master and hard work.*

- **Children**: sons and daughters of master and heirs of all the master owned.
- **Guardians/Managers**: adults assigned by master to train up his children for the purpose of taking over when they mature into adulthood.

In 1st century Hebrew society, the **master's children were treated in a similar way to the slaves**. They had most of the same rules, had to work hard, were expected to obey, and were punished when they didn't. They were assigned guardians who educated them, gave them rules, taught them the family business, and even disciplined them. Sometimes said managers even raised them in the ways of the faith and the Bible.

There were also some major differences however: **the master's kids were in no danger of being thrown in jail or being disinherited.**

Slavery back then was about paying off debt. The Torah states that when a Hebrew man has debts he can't pay, he can sell himself and his family members into slavery for 6 years. After the 6 years is over, he's set free and his debts are cancelled (*Exodus 21:2, Deuteronomy 15:12*). Jesus reminded His audience of this, promising to set them free as sons vs. slaves:

[Jhn 8:35 ESV] 35 The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever.

Back to Galatians 4: Paul is telling the converted Jews of this church that they've always been sons but were under the "guardian" of the OC: which was obedience to God's Laws aka *doing* the Law (works) in order to please the Lord and continue as an heir. ***Yet he's about to share the new and better covenant that Jesus brought them!***

[Gal 4:4-7 ESV] 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 **So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.**

Verse 4: the ***"fullness of time" is maturity***: when a child passes into adulthood and is expected to live like one...first within his own heart and mind.

When I was 16 my dad sat me down for lunch at a local diner in Addison and said: *"it's time for you to start working your way into the family business. I'll give you a choice: you can either work every day after school or weekends. You'll also work during Spring Break, all summer long, and Thanksgiving break."* (Those were all peak tree season times of planting, trimming, and harvesting.)

I was angry! **I was living a carefree lifestyle** of going out with friends, playing video games, and reading fantasy novels. I'd already spent years working on the farm, but now Dad was really upping the ante. Why? ***In his eyes the "fullness of time" had come for me to transition out of being a kid and preparing to be an heir.***

Does that sound like a lot of work? Yeah...**but now let's compare me to Dad's employees.** I'd seen many of them come and go. Some had stayed for years and were highly skilled, hard-working men who'd put in lots of hours and made big sacrifices for dad and the tree farm.

Yet they were employees.

- They could be fired at any time if dad thought they weren't performing.
- If they'd stolen or vandalized, dad could have them arrested and thrown in jail.
- When dad got angry at some failure on their part, he would verbally chastise them.
- None of them were forever, all were temporary.
- None of them would ever inherit anything.

Was dad hard on me? Yes.

- Did he chastise me when I failed to obey or perform? Yes.
- Was I expected to obey and work hard? Yes.

From being a kid to an adult, I'll wager dad **hired between 40-60 people** in that time frame who worked for him over the years...***but I was his heir...because I was his son.***

And when the "fullness of time" came, he turned the business over to me.

Jesus was and is our "fullness of time."

Let me highlight it once more: **the sons and daughters of the master were forever.**

If a slave disobeyed or disappointed his master too much or too long, he was thrown into debtors' prison...which was a prophetic symbol of Hell.

- Sons were never thrown into this jail.
- Sons were never cast out of their father's house.
- Sons were never disinherited.

This is called grace.

The Prodigal Son was rude, worldly, unthankful, disobedient, entitled, and thought only about himself and his own pleasures. He took his portion of his inheritance and spent it on booze and prostitutes. When he returned to his father's house he was welcomed with open arms and note: *the son's intention was a demotion to being a servant* so he could at least have room and board. **But his dad welcomes him back as a SON because sons are forever.**

You and I are sons and daughters of God our Father, all because of Jesus.

Christ transitioned us from being kids to adults: ready to receive our inheritance of the family business which is God's Kingdom. Make no mistake: our Heavenly Father still expects us to obey and work. He may even chastise us now and then.

Losing our Salvation or our inheritance is to be demoted from a son to a servant.

I sympathize with fellow Christians who believe we are in danger of losing these things and acknowledge them as good brothers and sisters in Christ who are being sincere.

That being said, *salvation and inheritance are the exclusive right of sons and daughters and are obtained and maintained by God's grace*, and not anything you and I do or did. If we did earn and/or maintain these things by our obedience, we would be able to brag about it.

To live as a son or daughter of God is to be in a relationship that we can't mess up.

I'll speak for myself: *I'm more than capable of messing up my relationships* and have done so.

- Aren't there times when we have a falling out with a friend or family member that lasts for years?
- Aren't people still getting divorces and breaking up?
- Are there kids who don't talk to their parents, and vice versa?

Is it fair to say that anyone of us are capable of relationship train wreck? My fellow brothers and sisters in Christ: if we are capable of destroying our relationship with God our Father then we likely done so. If we can sin enough to finally make Him say "*you're no longer my son or daughter*" then I'll wager we have.

Being a son or daughter of the Lord means we're secure in our bond with God and He remains our Father no matter what. That even if we become like the Prodigal, we can always return to our heavenly Dad Who is overjoyed that we were lost, but now are found.

Let's continue in Galatians 4 to fill this out:

[Gal 4:21-24 ESV] 21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. 23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. 24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

As Gentiles, you and I have never been under the OC. That being said, ***we were under a version of it because the Law is written into our conscience.*** Before Christ, our conscience told us that pleasing God came through obedience to God's commands. As long as we didn't murder or rob a bank, and did some good in the world, we were probably in good standing with God.

Paul brings us back to the time of Abraham. Sarah biologically couldn't have kids, but God has promised that He would work a miracle and she'd have one anyway. Time passed and nothing happened...so Abe has a kid with a slave woman named Hagar and bears Ishmael.

A few years later, ***God's prophetic promise to Sarah comes true*** and she bears a child named Issac.

- Hagar and Ishmael represent human plans and human effort. Therefore humans will take the credit.
- Hagar and Ishmael symbolize working to receive blessing and inheritance.
- Sarah and Isaac represent God's plan and God's effort and God gets the credit.
- Sarah and Isaac symbolize God's grace on us as His family to receive blessing and inheritance.

Look at verse 21 again: there are some who DESIRE to do it the old way: they want to **earn** greater love, blessing, acceptance, peace, and inheritance by WORKING for it. What does "working" mean? Taken in proper Biblical context, it means restraining oneself from sin and doing what's good.

A person like this WANTS to be a slave or a servant, earning their "room and board" with God. No, my brothers and sisters: Jesus set us free from that.

We're not servants nor are we kids still under a guardian: we're adult Christian sons and daughters whom the Lord is giving His Kingdom to. We're directly involved in the Family business. We are heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, and we call God "Abba Father!"

[Gal 4:28-31 ESV] 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Verse 28: Isaac was conceived all because of God b/c Sarah couldn't have kids. He was born because God promised he would be—neither Abe nor Sarah "did" anything to make this happen.

Under Christ, the promises God makes in the Bible come about because of Christ.

Our Salvation & inheritance aren't predicated on our obedience. (We can still bear the consequences of Galatians 6 that whatever we plant, we harvest.)

Let's start living like we're one of His sons and daughters with a safe and secure relationship with the Lord.

The world is failing. I started today's message by saying that 2025 has already revealed itself to be a violent bull who allowed us to mount it while it was still penned up in 2024. Now it's bucking and if it throws us off, it'll try and gore us.

- We can't depend on the New Year to treat us right.
- We can't look to the world to be just.
- We've been made sons and daughters of God, Who created the heavens and the earth!
- ***Even if the entire world degenerates into evil, we're still one with Jesus and our relationship with Him is secure!***

[1Jo 3:1 ESV] 1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

[Gal 3:26 ESV] 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

[Jhn 1:12 KJV] 12 But as many as received him, to them gave the power to become the sons of God, [even] to them that believe on his name.